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CARDIN SAYS LAW ENFORCEMENT MUST FOCUS INFORMATION RESOURCES TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

*Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee Hearing
Addresses Terrorism-related Information Sharing*

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee led a hearing today entitled **"Protecting National Security and Civil Liberties: Strategies for Terrorism Information Sharing."** The subcommittee heard from key witnesses on the need to strengthen coordination and information sharing between government agencies charged with preventing and disrupting terrorist attacks inside the United States. This was the first hearing of the Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee since Senator Cardin assumed the chairmanship for the 111th Congress from Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA), who now chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Excerpts of Senator Cardin's remarks are below. His full statement is available at cardin.senate.gov. Testimony from the hearing is available at judiciary.senate.gov.

"Our top priority in Congress is to protect the American people, and the primary charge of this subcommittee is to oversee anti-terrorism enforcement and policy. We must make sure that our law enforcement and intelligence professionals have the tools they need at their disposal to prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks. At the same time, we must insure that our government uses its scarce resources wisely, and that it strikes an appropriate balance between national security and protecting civil liberties," said Chairman Cardin.

"We have made much progress in coordinating our anti-terrorism efforts in the government since the 9/11 attacks. I am concerned, however, that the U.S. Government still does not have in place a comprehensive strategy to overcome bureaucratic hurdles to sharing of information that could prevent a terrorist attack. At the same time, I remain concerned that the government does not have adequate privacy and civil liberties protections in place when it comes to sharing this sensitive information.

"We need to insure that our law enforcement and intelligence agencies are focusing their scarce resources on terrorists that are intent on inflicting harm in the United States. In my own state of Maryland, we have seen cases where the Maryland State Police have misused their authority and conducted a 14-month undercover investigation by using confidential informants to infiltrate

non-violent peace activist groups. This leads to a chilling effect of the First Amendment rights of Americans, does not make America any safer, and makes citizens more distrustful of the government and less likely to cooperate with legitimate investigations. I am also trying to insure that information on these Maryland activists were not improperly entered into federal databases.

“I commend President Obama, Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence for ordering top-to-bottom reviews of federal agencies efforts to share homeland security intelligence information with their federal, state, local, and private sector counterparts.”

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